CHAMBER OF DARKNESS

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MARVEL COMICS GROUP

CHAMBER OF DARKNESS

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AND THE MONSTER MAN CAME WALKING.. WALKING..

ALSO, IN THIS INCREDIBLE ISSUE...

THE MAN WHO OWNED THE WORLD!

THE SECRET OF THE SILVER SWORD!

IN THE DARKNESS, BEYOND THE CONSCIOUS MIND OF MAN, THE RAGGED **SISTERS OF DESTINY** STIR THE HOT, BOILING BREW THAT NOURISHES THE DARKNESS IN THE HUMAN SPIRIT--FOR **MORTALS** LOVE TO PLAY THE **GAME OF EVIL**--THEY YEARN FOR THE **FACE** OF EVIL--TO **SEE** IT--TO **FEAR** IT--TO **HATE** IT--TO **DESTROY** IT--AND IT WOULD HAVE TO BE A FACE SUCH AS THE **VILLAGERS** KNEW--THE FACE OF--

THE MONSTER!

GLOW, FIRE! BURN, FLAME! REVEAL THE QUARRY OF THIS DEADLY GAME!! HEE-HEE-HEE--ISN'T HE A PRETTY ONE, DEAR SISTER?

HEE-HEE-HEE-HEE!! PERFECT FOR OUR NEEDS, DEAR SISTER--DESTINY HAS SHAPED HIM WELL FOR HIS ROLE! WHAT WEAK MORTAL COULD ABIDE HIM? HEE-HEE-HEE--!

A VERY SPECIAL VOYAGE INTO THE *WORLDS OF WEIRD*, CONDUCTED BY:
STAN LEE, EDITOR • **JACK KIRBY**, SCRIPT AND ART • **J. VERPOORTEN**, INKER • **ART SIMEK**, LETTERER

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AHHH--THE BREW IS GOOD AND *TRUE*-- JUST SAVOR THE SIGN OF *SATAN'S STEW!*

DEATH! DEATH THIS DAY! BUT NOT THE GAME'S *FINISH,* DEAR SISTER!

IT BEGINS AND ENDS WITH THE *VILLAGERS* BELOW! THEY HAVE COME UPON *HARD TIMES*--THE FAILURE OF CROPS, SICKNESS--POVERTY--THERE SEEMS NO END TO IT--AND THEY GRUMBLE WITH *DISCONTENT!*

THE PLAYERS GATHER--FOR ANDREAS FLEC--THE MONSTER--HAS APPEARED IN THE VILLAGE....!

IT'S *HIM*--THE *MONSTER!* FOR YEARS HE HIDES IN HIS CASTLE--AND NOW HE MAKES HIS *SECOND* VISIT HERE!

THAT *FACE*-- THAT *EVIL EYE!*

YES! WHILE WE SUFFER, HE SEEMS *HEALTHY* AND *SMUG!*

WHY *NOT?* IS IT NOT SAID THAT THE DEVIL TAKES CARE OF HIS *OWN?!*

I WONDER WHAT GOES ON IN THAT *CASTLE* OF HIS?

LOOK AT HIM! SEE HIS *CONTEMPT* FOR US! WHAT DO OUR LIVES AND PROPERTY MEAN TO ONE SUCH AS *THAT?*

IS HE REALLY A *SORCERER,* AS THEY SAY? CAN HE HARM MY *CHILDREN?*

THERE ARE *STORIES*-- STRANGE, FEARFUL TALES--

DON'T FOLLOW ME ABOUT WITH YOUR *WHISPERS!* WHY DIDN'T YOU *STORE* FOOD, AS *I* DID?

MONSTER! MONSTER! HOW MANY *SKELETONS* IN YOUR CASTLE, MONSTER?

LOOK OUT! HIS *GLANCE* CAN STRIKE US DOWN!

ANDREAS, MENACING IN HIS WRATH, ENTERS THE TINKER'S SHOP... TO THE UNSUSPECTING, HIS QUEST SEEMS SIMPLE AND DIRECT...

IS IT DONE, TINKER? HAVE YOU FASHIONED THE MUSIC BOX?

I HAVE IT, HERE! IT WAS MADE WITH GREAT CARE--

I'M PAYING YOU WELL FOR IT--PROBABLY MORE THAN YOUR SKILL MERITS! IT HAD BETTER PLEASE ME!

IT WILL PLAY THE MUSIC YOU WISH--A STRANGE TUNE--

NONE THAT WE HAVE HEARD BEFORE --IT SEEMS TO CAST A SPELL--

IT IS NOT A SPELL MEANT FOR YOU, TINKER'S WIFE! YOUR EARS HAVE LONG BEEN CLOSED TO SUCH MELODIES!

IN THE CLOUDED SILENCE THAT FOLLOWS, ANDREAS LEAVES IN HIS MYSTERIOUS MANNER...

YOU SHOULD HAVE HELD YOUR TONGUE, WOMAN! IT'S NOT WISE TO ANGER SUCH A MAN!

MONSTER, YOU MEAN--THAT MUSIC IS SURELY FOR SOME DEVIL'S RITUAL!

ANDREAS QUICKLY MOUNTS HIS CARRIAGE AND DEPARTS FROM THE VILLAGE! FOLLOWING HIM ARE THE SHRILL SHOUTS OF HATE...!

DON'T RETURN, MONSTER! WE DON'T WANT YOUR KIND!

TAKE YOUR EVIL WITH YOU--TO YOUR CURSED CASTLE!

AS THRU A BURSTING DAM, THE HATE POURS FORTH IN A FLOOD--EVERY HIDDEN GUILT AND FEAR AND DESPAIR SURGES IN ANDREAS' STORMY WAKE...!

THE DEMON ALMOST RAN US DOWN!

HE WOULD HAVE LIKED THAT!

THE MONSTER! HE'LL REGRET THIS! WE MUST TOLERATE HIM NO LONGER!

YES! WE MUST GET RID OF HIM! --ROUSE THE VILLAGE TO ACTION!

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THE PARTING THREATS MEAN NOTHING TO ANDREAS! HIS LIFE HAS BEEN SPENT IN SOLITUDE--WITHIN THE WORLD OF HIS OLD CASTLE--A REALITY OF HIS OWN MAKING.. WHERE THE OUTSIDE IS AN UNPLEASANT ILLUSION...

HOW GOOD IT FEELS TO BE HOME AGAIN! HOW WARM--HOW TRANQUIL!

--AND THIS MUSIC BOX--WHAT A HAPPY SURPRISE IT WILL BE FOR MARIE!

YET, THIS TIME-WORN, SOMBER WORLD IS NOT UNSHARED--THERE IS BEAUTY AND GRACE AND THE PRESENCE OF A LOVELY WOMAN...

I HAVE IT, MARIE--JUST AS I PROMISED! IT IS THE MUSIC BOX; REMEMBER?

THE ONE THAT PLAYS ONLY OUR SONG!

AH--YOU ARE OVERCOME BY EMOTION! THERE IS NO NEED FOR WORDS--

I KNOW HOW EAGER YOU MUST BE TO HEAR THE FIRST NOTES!

THERE, NOW--AS I OPEN THE LID, OUR LITTLE WORLD SHALL NO LONGER BE CHEERLESS!

LISTEN, MY DEAR--

DO YOU HEAR IT? ISN'T IT WONDERFUL? HOW IT FILLS THE HEART?

SHALL WE SING IT TOGETHER, MARIE?

TIME HAS ALMOST MADE THEM AS ONE! HER THOUGHTS ARE HIS---ANDREAS HAS THE POWER TO ANTICIPATE HER EVERY WISH...

OH--OF COURSE, PERHAPS, LATER--!

WHAT? I SEE--

YOU WISH ME TO READ YOUR FAVORITE SONNETS WHILE THE MUSIC PLAYS--!

AND THUS, ANDREAS FLEC LIVES IN QUIET CONTENT, WHILE THE OUTSIDE WORLD SEETHES WITH THE CLAMOR OF CRISIS! HE WILL HAVE NONE OF SUCH MADNESS--HERE IS THE MAGIC TINKLE OF THE MUSIC BOX--THE BEAUTY OF TIMELESS WORDS--AND THE MORE RADIANT BEAUTY OF MARIE--SERENE AND LOYAL--LISTENING ATTENTIVELY TO HIS EVERY WORD! IT IS A PERFECT WORLD TO ANDREAS...

"IF TIME STANDS STILL, SO BE IT... IF BEAUTY STANDS ETERNAL-- SO BE IT...!"

"BUT, THOUGH I WITHER AND DIE IN THE SHADOW OF THEE-- SO BE IT!"

BUT, THE ODOR OF DEVIL'S BREW BLOWS DOWN FROM THE DARK HILLS! THE TRAP OF DESTINY IS CLOSING ON THE PEACEFUL WORLD OF ANDREAS FLEC...!

MAKE NO SOUND! THE MONSTER MUST NOT SUSPECT HE HAS VISITORS!

HE'S READING-- I'LL WAGER THAT IS SATAN'S BOOK OF LOST SOULS!

THAT'S IT! THE MONSTER IS CONDUCTING THE DARK RITUAL!

AND THAT GIRL--SHE SAT SO STILL--AS IF SPELLBOUND BY THAT SERVANT OF LUCIFER!

MAKE HASTE! WE MUST SUMMON THE OTHERS-- TO SAVE THE GIRL!

FOLLOW ME, MEN! THIS TIME WE'VE CAUGHT THE MONSTER--HOLDING PRISONER SOME POOR GIRL HE HAS CAPTURED!

THERE MAY BE ONLY MOMENTS LEFT BEFORE HE OFFERS UP HIS VICTIM TO SATAN!

WE MUST STOP HIM AT ALL COSTS!

I KNEW IT! THAT MONSTER WAS AT THE BOTTOM OF ALL OUR TROUBLES!

THE SOUND OF DOOM IS NEVER SILENT... ANDREAS IS ALERTED TO ITS COMING!!

MEN! TORCHES! THE RABBLE FROM THE VILLAGE COME THIS WAY!

THEY SOUND UGLY--ENRAGED!

I SUPPOSE IT HAD TO HAPPEN! THEY HAVE ALWAYS HATED ME--FEARED ME--AND NOW, AT LAST THEY ACT!

I'LL USE THE ROOF TO REACH THE ROOM WHICH CONTAINS MY COLLECTION OF ANTIQUE PISTOLS!

THEY MAY BE BENT ON VIOLENCE! I MUST BE READY FOR THAT!

WHY DO THEY COME HERE? THEY'VE ALWAYS SHUNNED ME--I DIDN'T CARE--I MADE MY OWN WORLD IN THIS PLACE!

AND NOW OUR WORLDS COLLIDE! WHY? IT MAKES NO SENSE--THEY ANGER WITHOUT REASON!

THEY'RE JUST SUPERSTITIOUS FOOLS--THE VICTIMS OF THEIR OWN FEARS!

BUT, PERHAPS THIS PISTOL WILL FRIGHTEN THEM AWAY! THEY MUST NOT DISTURB MY WORLD!

THEY HAVE COME! THEY'RE BREAKING DOWN THE DOOR!

STAY CALM, MARIE! YOUR ANDREAS WILL TAKE CHARGE OF THIS!

STAND BACK! WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?

LOOK OUT! HE'S GOT A GUN!

SO HAVE I!

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SNOOT! BEFORE HE GETS ONE OF US!

THIS'LL STOP HIM!

-UHH--H- WHY-- W-WH--Y--

MARIE-- MAR--

BAM!

THE SOUND OF VIOLENCE FADES, EVEN AS ANDREAS BREATHES HIS LAST...

HE'S DEAD! THE MONSTER IS DEAD!

HE'LL PLAGUE US NO MORE! AND, WE'VE SAVED THE GIRL!

BUT--LOOK AT THE GIRL! LOOK AT HER!

THE WIG--THE WAXEN FACE-- THE ARTIFICIAL LIMBS--

SHE'S NOT REAL!

SHE IS FROM SOME STORE WINDOW-- A MANNIKIN!

WITH THE RETURN OF REASON, THE SECRET OF ANDREAS FLEC REVEALS ITSELF...!

SHE WAS REAL TO HIM--HE CALLED HER MARIE--!

SO--THE MONSTER WAS NOTHING BUT A TRAGIC HERMIT!

ALL THESE YEARS--SHUT AWAY FROM REALITY--HE MADE HIS OWN--!

HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN PUT OUT OF HARM'S WAY--IN SOME ASYLUM--

YES! THEN THIS MIGHT NEVER HAVE HAPPENED!

FOOL! HE WAS OUT OF HARM'S WAY--HERE-- IN HIS WORLD--OR SO HE THOUGHT!

BUT WE WERE THE MONSTERS-- WE WERE THE DEVILS!

ON THE HILL OF WITCHES, THE FIRES ARE OUT--AND THE SISTERS OF FATE HAVE FLED-- BUT WHAT OF MAN'S ANCIENT FEARS--HAVE THEY GONE AS WELL...?

HI THERE... I'M **TOM SUTTON**, PINCHHITTING FOR MY OL' PAL **HEADSTONE**... HE WAS CALLED AWAY ON A MATTER OF **DEEP** CONCERN... PROBABLY **DIGGING** INTO IT RIGHT THIS MOMENT... BUT SO YOU WON'T BE **BORED** WHILE HE'S GONE, TAKE A LOOK AT MY **BOARD**-- DRAWING TYPE-- AND I'LL SPIN YOU A MODEST LITTLE TALE ABOUT--

THE MAN WHO OWNED THE WORLD!

MR. IRKADIN... I PLEAD WITH YOU--! YOUR SELFISHNESS WILL RUIN THE WORLD--!

THAT'S THE **WORLD'S** CONCERN... NONE OF MINE!

I HAVE A **DREAM**...OF **IMMORTALITY**... A DREAM WHICH **MUST** BE **FULFILLED!**

PLEASE, GRANDFATHER, LISTEN... BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

SILENCE... ALL OF YOU! BEGIN THE PROCESS-- NOW!

STAN LEE
EDITOR

TOM SUTTON
STORY AND ART

DENNIS J. O'NEIL
SCRIPTER

JEAN IZZO
LETTERER

IT IS THE FUTURE--THE VERY *NEAR* FUTURE--AND GREGORY IRKADIN IS BEING *FROZEN ALIVE!* AS THE DEATH-COLD GASES SEEP INTO HIS PORES, HE REMEMBERS HOW IT BEGAN...

...HE RECALLS THE FIRST THRILL OF *AMBITION* AS HE HAPPENED ACROSS AN ITEM IN THE BACK PAGES OF THE NEW YORK TIMES...

SCIENTIST DISCOVERS SUSPENDED ANIMATION PROCESS

CYNTHIA! COME HERE--*IMMEDIATELY!*

FORGET THE CORRESPONDENCE ...GET ME *THIS MAN!!*

I HAVE THE LETTERS READY FOR YOUR SIGNATURE, GRANDPA--

OFFER ANYTHING HE ASKS--BUT *GET* HIM!

AND SO, THE GIRL WENT TO A CERTAIN SMALL LABORATORY, WHERE...

...I CAN'T BE INTERRUPTED! MY RESEARCHES ARE TOO *IMPORTANT!*

I'M TRULY SORRY...BUT I STRONGLY ADVISE YOU TO *COME!*

MY GRANDFATHER IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S *RICHEST* MEN!

THUS, THE SCIENTIST IS BOUGHT--AS IRKADIN HAS PURCHASED SO MANY OTHERS! AND, A MONTH LATER...

THE WORK IS PROGRESSING BETTER THAN I'D DARED *HOPE!*

THEN YOUR EXPECTATIONS WERE CONSIDERABLY *LOWER* THAN *MINE!*--

BECAUSE *I* THINK YOU'RE *SLACKING!*

HERE IS A *CHECK!* GO TO WORK FOR MY GRANDFATHER... AND IT'S *YOURS!*

A *HUNDRED MILLION?* I SHOULDN'T--FOR *ANY* AMOUNT--!

HOWEVER, I *DESPERATELY* NEED FUNDS TO CONTINUE MY *RESEARCH*--

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PERHAPS I'M NOT WORKING AS FAST AS I MIGHT--

BUT AS I TOLD YOU, THE *CRYOGEN GAS** IS ONLY A *BY-PRODUCT* OF A TASK FAR MORE *ESSENTIAL*--

--THAT OF FINDING A SOLUTION TO MANKIND'S GRAVEST PROBLEM--GRADUAL DISINTEGRATION OF THE VERY *ATMOSPHERE* OF THE EARTH...!

RAP! RAP!

I'LL NOT HEAR YOUR *WHIMPERING!*

BUT, UNLESS WE CAN REVERSE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE AIR SUPPLY, LIFE ON OUR PLANET IS *DOOMED*--!

I SAID-- *SILENCE!* CONTINUE YOUR LABORS--AND DON'T STOP UNTIL YOU'VE *SUCCEEDED!*

*CRYONICS IS THE SCIENCE OF PRESERVING LIFE AT EXTREMELY LOW TEMPERATURES! --STAN.

CYNTHIA, HAVE MY BROKER *SELL* THE REMAINDER OF MY HOLDINGS!

THAT WILL PLUNGE THE MARKET INTO *PANIC!* AND *ALREADY*, YOU'VE THROWN *THOUSANDS* OUT OF JOBS!

SMASH!

THOUSANDS OF *WHAT*--? WEAKLINGS, COWARDS, FOOLS...

IF THEY WERE AS *STRONG*--AS *RUTHLESS*-- AS I, THEY WOULD NEED *NO ONE*...

--AS *I* NEED NO ONE!

THEN, IRKADIN SUPERVISED THE TRANSFER OF HIS CAPITAL TO A BANK...

FIRST CENTRAL BANK

IN A HUNDRED YEARS, MY MONEY WILL HAVE ACCUMULATED *BILLIONS* IN INTEREST...!

I SHALL OWN-- *EVERYTHING!*

AND, IN THE COMFORT OF HIS MANSION...

THE COLLAPSE BROUGHT ABOUT BY GREGORY IRKADIN'S SUDDEN ACTION HAS CAUSED A *MAJOR CRISIS!*

ALREADY, HUNGRY WORKERS ARE *RIOTING* IN WASHINGTON AND MOSCOW...

LET THEM RIOT! SOON, I'LL BE *FREE* OF THE STENCH OF 20TH CENTURY LIFE!

EARLY THE NEXT DAY, IRKADIN RECEIVED A DELEGATION OF GOVERNMENT LEADERS...

WE BEG YOU TO *RECONSIDER!*

I'VE HEARD ALL THAT *BEFORE!* I IGNORED IT THEN -- AS I IGNORE IT *NOW!*

THE ANSWER, GENTLEMEN, IS *NO!*

OR AT LEAST SPEND SOME OF YOUR FORTUNE ON *RESEARCH!* THE GRADUAL DESTRUCTION OF OXYGEN, THE POPULATION EXPLOSION...

FINALLY...

IT'S READY, MR. IRKADIN!

AND ABOUT *TIME!*

LIE IN THE UNIT AND *RELAX!*

REMEMBER, I'VE PAID YOU *A HUNDRED MILLION* FOR YOUR LABOR-- PROVIDED YOU CONSTRUCT ONLY *ONE* OF THESE GADGETS!

I COULDN'T BUILD ANOTHER IF I *WANTED* TO...

--YOU'VE MADE CERTAIN THAT I USED *ALL* THE NECESSARY MATERIALS IN *EXISTENCE!*

INDEED I HAVE! *NO OTHER* MUST FOLLOW WHERE I LEAD!

BY THE WAY, I HAVE *ALSO* ARRANGED THAT PAYMENT OF YOUR FEE WILL BE *STOPPED*, SHOULD ANYTHING GO *WRONG* HERE!

I KNOW! AND FOR THAT REASON, NOTHING *WILL* GO WRONG!

THE WORLD DESPERATELY *NEEDS* THAT MONEY--

--TO FINANCE ITS *SALVATION!*

ENTER THE CAPSULE, MR. IRKADIN!

ENOUGH IDLE CHATTER! THROW THE SWITCH-- *BEGIN!*

I AM...AND I ONLY REGRET THAT THE PROCESS IS *PAINLESS!*

IN THESE FEW INSTANTS OF *WAKEFULNESS* BEFORE THE LONG SLEEP, GREGORY IRKADIN *REMEMBERS* AND A TINY *CHUCKLE* STIRS IN HIS THROAT...

...A SMALL, HARSH *LAUGH* BORN OF GREED AND ANTICIPATION...!

THEN IT *DIES*, AS A COLD BEYOND *COLDNESS* SEIZES HIM, NUMBING HIM TO THE MARROW...

...A CHILL THAT DESTROYS *CONSCIOUSNESS*--AND *TIME* ITSELF!

A CENTURY PASSES...A HUNDRED YEARS WHICH LEAVE THE STILL, SILENT SLEEPER *UNTOUCHED*...

...UNTIL, AT LAST, AN *ATOMIC TIMER* DISPERSES THE GAS...SENDS GENTLE ELECTRICAL *IMPULSES* INTO IRKADIN'S BODY...

...LONG DORMANT PROCESSES AGAIN FUNCTION... AND HE OPENS HIS *EYES*...

...AND FILLS THE SEALED CHAMBER WITH A CRY OF *EXULTATION*...!

I *DID* IT--

--I'M *ALIVE!*

--*ALIVE!!*

I ALMOST WISH MY *GRAND-DAUGHTER* AND THE *SCIENTIST* WERE ALIVE *WITH* ME...

...SO THEY COULD SEE ME *REALIZE* MY AMBITION...

...TO POSSESS NOT MERELY *WEALTH*-- BUT *ALL!!*

WHAT *PROGRESS* HAS BEEN MADE--! WHAT *SPLENDOR* IS NOW MINE--?

ONLY A FEW MORE *YARDS* TO THE SURFACE...

ODD--! AS I GET CLOSER TO THE OUTSIDE, IT'S BECOMING MORE *DIFFICULT TO BREATHE*...

...AND I HEAR *NOTHING!*

I OPEN THE LAST DOOR-- OPEN IT AND GAZE UPON--

JUST OUTSIDE THIS WALL, THE GREATEST FORTUNE ANY MAN EVER *DREAMT* OF AWAITS ME--

OH...*NO!* OH PLEASE... LET ME BE *DREAMING*...OH, *PLEASE*...!

BUT, AS HIS LUNGS ACHE FOR WANT OF *AIR*-- FOR LACK OF THE LIFE-GIVING OXYGEN NOW ALMOST VANISHED FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH-- GREGORY IRKADIN KNOWS HE IS *NOT* DREAMING--!

IN MEMORY OF
GREGORY IRKADIN
WHO FINANCED
THE HUMAN RACE'S
ESCAPE FROM AN
EARTH HE HELPED
DESTROY.
ON THIS DAY MAN
GOES TO THE
STARS.
JUNE 25, 1035

AND THEN, HE REALIZES THAT HE *DOES* INDEED OWN THE EARTH-- A DESOLATE, DYING EARTH-- AND THAT IT WAS DEFINITELY A *BAD INVESTMENT*--!

YEP, THE SCIENTIST USED OL' GREG'S CASH TO DEVELOP THE DANDIEST FASTER-THAN-LIGHT DRIVE YOU EVER SAW--WITH WHICH TO TRANSPORT ALL OF MANKIND TO *ANOTHER* WORLD-- A BRAVER, *NEWER* WORLD--ONE WHICH WILL *NEVER* BE OWNED BY THE LIKES OF GREGORY IRKADIN!

END

THE SUN TURNED *CRIMSON* AS THE HARD-FOUGHT BATTLE RAGED...AS *STARR THE SLAYER* STRUCK BLOW AFTER BLOW TO SAVE THE CITY HE RULED FROM THE SCARLET *BEHEMOTH* WHICH MENACED IT! AND ON THE PURPLE PLAIN ABOVE MANY-TOWERED ZARDATH, THE EVIL WIZARD *TRULL* RECITED HIS MOST POTENT SPELLS...FOR, THIS DAY WOULD MARK THE *FINAL ENCOUNTER* OF...

THE SWORD AND THE SORCERERS!

BY ALL THE GODS OF THE GREAT ABYSS!

MY MIGHTIEST BLOWS HAVE *NO EFFECT* ON THE FIRE-BREATHING MAN-DRAGON CONJURED UP BY *TRULL!*

YET, I MUST *FIGHT ON*... FOR THE CITY OF *ZARDATH!*

IF YOU, YOU CAN'T QUITE FIGURE OUT WHAT'S GOING ON, FRIEND, JUST KEEP READING! SO SAY:

STAN LEE EDITOR • **ROY THOMAS** WRITER • **BARRY SMITH** ARTIST

JEAN IZZO, LETTERER

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SUDDENLY, AMIDST A BLAZING BLINDING *FLASH OF LIGHT*--

WHAT UNSPEAKABLE *MADNESS* IS THIS?

THE MAN-DRAGON HAS *VANISHED!!*

AND-- IN ITS *PLACE*--

YES, YOU BRAINLESS OUTLANDER... *TRULL THE WIZARD* NOW STANDS IN THE MONSTER'S PLACE!

SO, SPEAK NO MORE TO ME OF YOUR *"MIGHTIEST BLOWS"* -- FOR THEY ARE AS *NOTHING* BESIDE MY OWN POWERS!

JUST AS *YOU* ARE NOTHING BUT A *MOTE OF DUST*...WHICH I CAN NOW *DESTROY!*

MAY THE NIGHT-SHADES PROTECT ME!

THE MAN-DRAGON APPEARS *ANEW*... FAR *LARGER* THAN BEFORE... HOLDING ME IN A GRIP OF *IRON!*

WHAT MERE HUMAN CAN WITHSTAND SUCH *WIZARDRY?*

NONE, DEAR STARR... AND CERTAINLY NOT SOME *BARBARIAN BORN* SUCH AS YOU!

NOW THE PEOPLE OF ANCIENT *ZARDATH* WILL KNOW WHO THEIR *TRUE RULER* SHOULD BE!

SLAY THE SLAYER, DEMON OF THE DEPTHS!

THEN DID THE GREAT-THEWED LEVIATHAN *LIFT* THE HUMAN SWORDSMAN OVER THE *FLAMES* THAT ROARED ABOUT THEM... AS A *MAN* MIGHT HOLD AN *INSECT*...!

NOW *BEHOLD*, SAVAGE, AS AS I FORM THE *SIGN OF CHAOS* ABOVE MY HEAD!

FOR, IT SIGNALS YOUR *END*... AND THE BEGINNING OF *SLAVERY* FOR THE CITY WHOSE THRONE YOU USURPED FROM *TRULL!*

BEHOLD--AND DIE!!

A SCREAMING FIREBALL STREAKING AT ME FROM OUT OF THE VOID!

IT MEANS MY CERTAIN DOOM... UNLESS...

THE NEXT INSTANT, A DESPERATELY-RAISED BROADSWORD, AND--

THE MAN-DRAGON... HAS VANISHED ONCE MORE...THIS TIME NOT TO RETURN...

TRULL RECKONED... WITHOUT THE POWER...OF MY HEAVEN-FORGED BLADE!

IT DEFLECTED HIS FIREBALL... AND CAUSED THE EXPLOSION... WHICH FREED ME...!

BUT, MY HEAD...STILL SPINS, AND...

WAIT!! BEHIND ME!

YOU WITLESS WANDERER!

TRULL!

YOUR HEATHEN SWORD DESTROYED ONLY THE MAN-DRAGON... NOT HIS CREATOR!

THEN, EVEN AS BLACKNESS OVERCAME THE BARBARIAN'S STUNNED SENSES.. EVEN AS TRULL CAST HIS MOST DEADLY SPELL...

...STARR THE SLAYER HURLED HIS BROADSWORD ONE LAST, LETHAL TIME...!

NO! NOOO!!

WH--? I'M AWAKE AGAIN, THANK THE LORD!

AND-- I'VE GOT A PLOT-- FOR MY NEXT STORY!

BUT THE STRAIN! I CAN'T TAKE THE STRAIN ANY LONGER--!

H'LO, WHITNEY? LEN CARSON HERE!

YEAH, I'VE DREAMED UP ANOTHER STARR THE SLAYER CLASSIC FOR THAT RAG YOU CALL A MAGAZINE!

BUT, I JUST CALLED TO SAY YOU WON'T LIKE THE ENDING..

'CAUSE I'M GONNA KILL OFF THAT SWORD-SWINGIN' SLOB!

WADDAYA MEAN, I CAN'T DO THAT?!

I'M THE AUTHOR, BABY! I CAN DO ANYTHING I WANT TO!

YOU JUST PUBLISH 'EM AND LET ME WRITE 'EM, HUH?

HE HUNG UP ON ME!

COULD BE I JUST KNOCKED OFF THE BEST MEAL TICKET A WRITER EVER HAD!

A FEW HOURS OF FRANTIC TYPING LATER...

WELL, I MIGHT AS WELL MAIL IN MY SWORD-AND-SORCERY SWAN SONG!

EVENING, MR. CARSON!

STILL WRITING THOSE STORIES YOU CLAIM COME TO YOU IN YOUR DREAMS?

JUST FINISHED MY LAST ONE, O'NEAL!

THE DOC SAYS THEY GET ME TOO UPTIGHT!

ULCERS... THE WHOLE MAGILLA!

SORRY TO HEAR THAT!

I READ ONE OF 'EM THE OTHER DAY!

THEY WERE GOOD... REAL GOOD!

LISTEN TO KXRQ

MAMA MAZZI'S PIZZA

YEAH... GOOD ENOUGH TO KNOCK ME OUTTA MY GOURD!

ANOTHER NIGHTMARE LIKE TONIGHT'S ...AND I'D GO BANANAS!

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I GOT KIND OF ATTACHED TO OL' STARR, THOUGH!

FUNNY... I CAN'T HELP FEELING A BIT LIKE A--

MURDERER!!

WHAT?!?

WHO IN THE DEVIL--?

PERHAPS YOU CAN SEE ME BETTER IF I STEP INTO THE LIGHT, VILLAIN!

YOU-- STARR!

BUT-- I CREATED YOU-- GAVE YOU LIFE--!

YOU'RE NOT REAL!!

NO, EVIL ONE?

THEN, STAND YOU STILL... FOR A PHANTOM BLADE CAN SCARCELY HARM YOU!

AYE, ASSASSIN... IT IS STARR THE SLAYER WHO STANDS BEFORE YOU!

HE WHOM YOU MEAN TO DESTROY-- BUT WHO SHALL SLAY YOU INSTEAD!

BUT SOON, YOU SHALL DODGE MY BITING SWORD NO LONGER-- --AND THEN--

HAH! I SEE YOU HAVE NOT COURAGE TO TEST YOUR FINE WORDS, WIZARD!

W-WAIT! YOU-- CALLED ME WIZARD!

BUT, IT WAS TRULL WHO WAS YOUR MAGICAL ENEMY-- NOT I!

LIAR!

YOU ARE FAR *WORSE*-- FAR MORE *DANGEROUS* EVEN THAN *TRULL!*

COULD HE HAVE *SUMMONED* ME *HERE*, TO A LAND WHOSE TITAN *TOWERS* DWARF EVEN THOSE OF MIGHTY *ZARDATH?*

ONE MOMENT, I BATTLED TRULL NEAR THE CITY I ONCE *WRESTED* FROM HIS CORRUPT GRIP!

THE NEXT, I *STOOD* AMIDST THESE *MINARETS* OF BLAZING CRYSTAL--

--AND SENSED THAT *YOU* HAD BROUGHT ME HERE-- TO *SLAY* ME!

BUT, IT IS *I* WHO AM CALLED... THE *SLAYER!*

NO! I-- I *DREAMED* YOU UP, I TELL YOU!

LOOK! LOOK AT THIS *PAPER!*

BAH! YOUR STRANGE *SYMBOLS* MEAN NOTHING TO *STARR!*

AND NOW-- PREPARE TO *DIE*, ASSASSIN!

BUT-- I *CREATED* YOU-- AND I MADE YOU --A *HERO!*

YOU CAN'T JUST *MURDER* ME-- IN COLD *BLOOD!*

AND WHO WOULD DARE TO CALL IT *MURDER*, WIZARD--

--WHEN I KILL *ONLY* TO SAVE MY OWN *LIFE!?*

his incanta
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The End

...DO YOU HEAR MY WORDS, MY LORD?

IT IS I... MORRO, YOUR FAITHFUL MINSTREL!

AHHH... HE STIRS, AND SO HE LIVES!

AYE, GOOD MORRO...!

BUT... HOW DID I RETURN HERE...

...WHEN, MERE MOMENTS AGO, I SLEW MY MOST DEADLY FOE... IN A STRANGE AND FAR-OFF LAND?

NAY, MY LORD! YOU HAVE LAIN HERE THESE LONG MINUTES PAST...

...WHILE THE EVIL TRULL LIES DEAD, IMPALED, UPON THIS VERY PLAIN!

IT WAS NOT OF TRULL THAT I SPOKE, FAITHFUL ONE!

FOR, I HAVE DREAMED A DREAM... A VISION OF CITIES OF GLASS AND GLEAMING METAL...

A WORLD WHERE I FOUGHT MY GREATEST, MOST FATEFUL BATTLE... FOR MY VERY SOUL ITSELF!

BUT YOU WON, MY LORD... YOU WON!

TELL ME OF THIS DREAM, THAT I MAY COMPOSE A SONG OF IT!

PERHAPS I SHALL, MINSTREL... ONE DAY.!

NOW COME... FOR THE CITY AWAITS ITS RIGHTFUL KING.!!

"...AND STARR THE SLAYER DID RETURN UNTO HIS SILVER-SPIRED PALACE... AND THERE DID RULE WISELY AND JUSTLY TILL THE END OF HIS DAYS... AND THEY WERE MANY!"
-- THE CHRONICLES OF ZARDATH.

END

7

CHAFF FROM THE CHAMBER!

SEND YOUR LETTERS TO: THE MARVEL COMICS GROUP 625 MADISON AV. NEW YORK, N. Y. 10022

Dear Stan,

You are now into your fourth issues of Marvel's mystery books, and though these two magazines don't have letters pages, this letter is meant as a report of my thoughts toward these publications. As I'm almost 18 and have been a comic book fan, collector, and reader for 7 years, I feel that I have some knowledge of this medium.

Though I have no knowledge of how successful Marvel's two mystery books are sales-wise, I know they fail in their reason for being. Why do you feel the need to use your staff artists for covers? If you use only staff artists, you are not experimenting in the magazines that you could. Also, Smilin' Stan's introductions spoil any moods that go with the story. Other stories are just plain bad. These things are leading Marvel's mystery mags down a path as exciting and as original as Doris Day.

In the future why not come up with two new and striking title logos for the magazines (the current ones looks like they're for Casper the Ghost). Also try to pair the right artist to the right story; Steranko should have done "The Day of The Red Death." If you need more than seven pages to develop a story, take them--mold the comic's format to fit the story package, not the other way around.

I've only started, but I'll stop for awhile. In the end, I'm still with you, but these magazines aren't your tops.

James Shull, 4546 Fulton Avenue,
Sherman Oaks, California 91403

Ouch! Jim, we just hope that you like some of our newer stuff a bit better.

As for your questions about which artists we use--well you should realize that free-lance artists have the right to choose the work they are most interested in, and sometimes, they get caught up in so many assignments that they may have trouble completing some work on schedule. Since it is very important that we get each and every book out on time, sometimes the importance of meeting this schedule has to mean more than getting a favorite artist to do some special job. Even more important--one of the main reasons we use the artists on our staff is that we think they are among the best artists we have working for us who can handle those special jobs, like covers that really show what the magazine is all about.

We are still feeling our way around a bit with TOWER and CHAMBER. We have a fairly good idea of what we want to do with both of them, but finding out from our fans just what they like is going to be important.

So, let us know what you're thinking out there--we'll see if we can do something about it!

Dear Stan and Gang,

Just finished CHAMBER OF DARKNESS #2 and I gotta tell you that even though there were some high spots, the mag was disappointing.

The first two stories were sort of corny, and the new version of Poe's classic seemed to have lost something in translation.

The art work was pretty good, though. I really dug Syd Shores use of Digger to separate panels! And Marie's own distinctive style of faces is always a groove. Ditto for Don Heck's people.

When are you gonna use more of those "Old Masters" Stan mentioned in the intro to the Poe story? I'd like to see more Poe (if you do it right, that is) and also Lovecraft, Saki, and the rest.

Also, I sure hope you're gonna get rid of Digger and Gravely! I know that I said that I liked the way Syd Shores drew Digger, but I like the idea of having Stan or other Bullpen people introduce stories. Digger and Gravely are just too corny and seem like imitations of some competitors you have.

Well, That's all for now. Good Luck . . . and MAKE MINE MARVEL!!!

Bill Peckmann, 2927 Covington Ave.
Bronx, N. Y. 10462

Thanks for the kind words, Bill--and even for the criticism! If you're an "Old Master" fan, we hope you liked Barry Smith's treatment of H.P. Lovecraft's terror-tale "The Terrible Old Man" in TOWER OF SHADOWS #3. Also, by the time you're reading this, Tom Palmer and Denny O'Neil's adaption of Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart" has come out in CHAMBER #3. We do want to do more of this sort of thing.

Also, we wound up agreeing with Marveldam's verdict about Digger and Gravely. We'll be gradually phasing these two characters out of our books in favor of artist and/or writer introductions.

But, Stan and Roy didn't agree with your verdict on our first Poe adaptation--"The Day of the Red Death." They both thought that a more modern setting would carry the mood and thought of Poe's classic across to people more directly, although they both hope that reading our version of the story would get folks interested in reading the original. What do the rest of you mystery-mag buffs think?

Dear Stan,

I dart, quickly but cautiously, across the busy street, dodging the maniacal drivers and muddy potholes. With a sigh of relief I stop panting, weary, but safe at the corner drugstore. As I wipe my perspiring brow I glance at the cluttered, wire book rack. A gasp escapes my parched lips. TOWER OF SHADOWS, a SGT. FURY SPECIAL, and CAPTAIN AMERICA!! At last!

After doling out, with much reluctance, the ridiculous price of 63¢, I run over to a dark corner and pour over the revered tomes.

Back to this sane, sad world again. The art in TOS was very good, especially in the last two stories. Steranko's art was fantastic, but not so noticeable because of the inspired but garish inking.

The plots lacked something. They gave you a feeling something was missing, all except for Stan's (natch). His version of an old story was excellent, but that title, "A Time To Die," was a bit off. I really loved Big John's art.

As to the Digger, the horrendous host, I say, "Why him? Why not some creaky old hunchback nicknamed Quas sitting in an old, batty belfry?" As far as I'm concerned, Digger would be more appropriate in CHAMBER OF DARKNESS.

Well, so much for that. Say, got any special No-Prizes lyin' around? I could use one to support my lantern (these lambs get awful dark).

Lester Yocum, General Delivery,
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Les, we know your letter was mainly about TOWER #1, but you did mention CHAMBER, and that gives us a chance to let everybody read about your trials and tribulations!

Hope you're not too set on seein' Digger in our CHAMBER, tho. As we said to Bill Peckmann, elsewhere on this page, we kinda like the idea of having our own Marvel Madmen introduce their stories--at least then the fans will know who to blame!!

Dear Stan,

I'm a fan who doesn't like mystery stories. But boy!! You almost changed me in one issue. The stories and art were too much. The only thing that can compare with them are the old EC classics.

Steve Wright, Route 2, Box 1,
Munfordville, Ky. 42765

Thanks muchly for that comparison, Steve. We've been old EC fans for some time, and if what we're doing is even near those magnificent achievements in comic art--well, it's nice to know how good a try you think we made!